

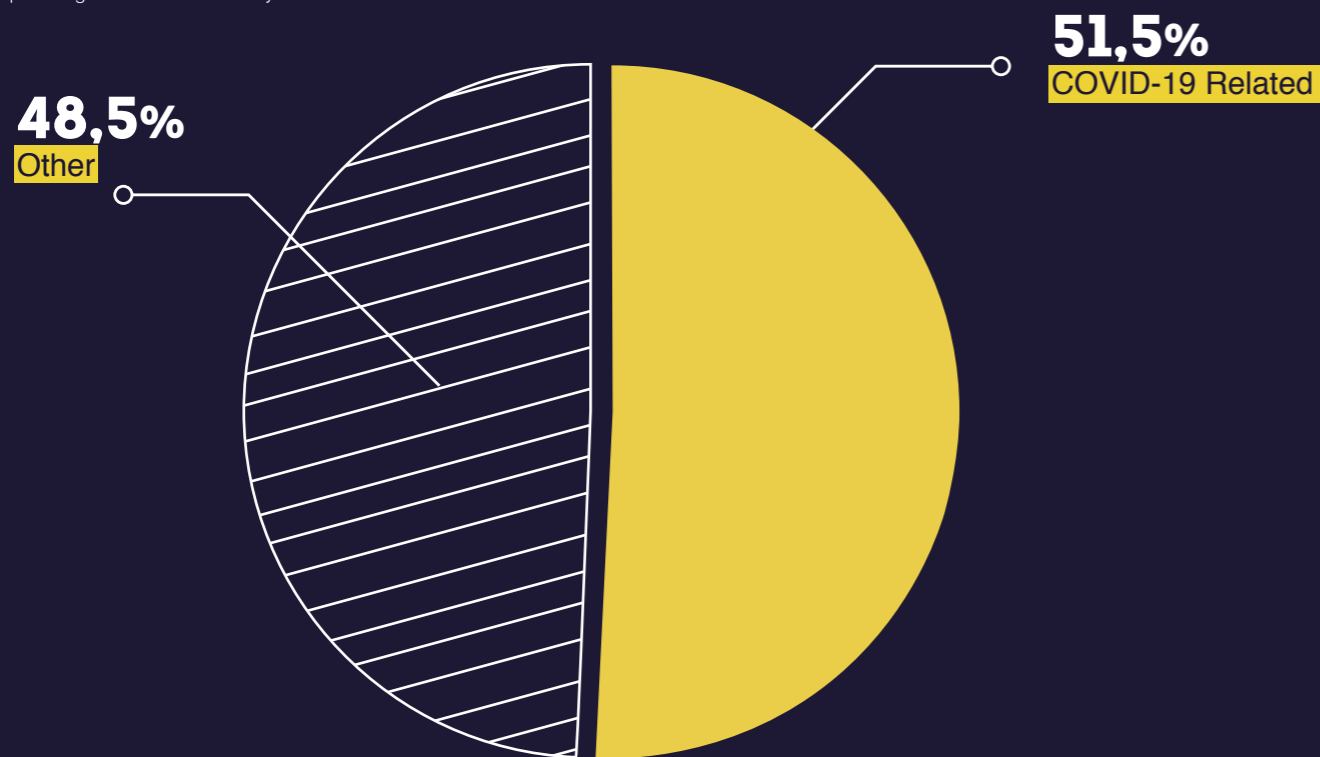


European Digital Media Observatory

# **THE OMICRON WAVE GALVANISED NEW AND OLD HOAXES ABOUT COVID-19 VACCINE**

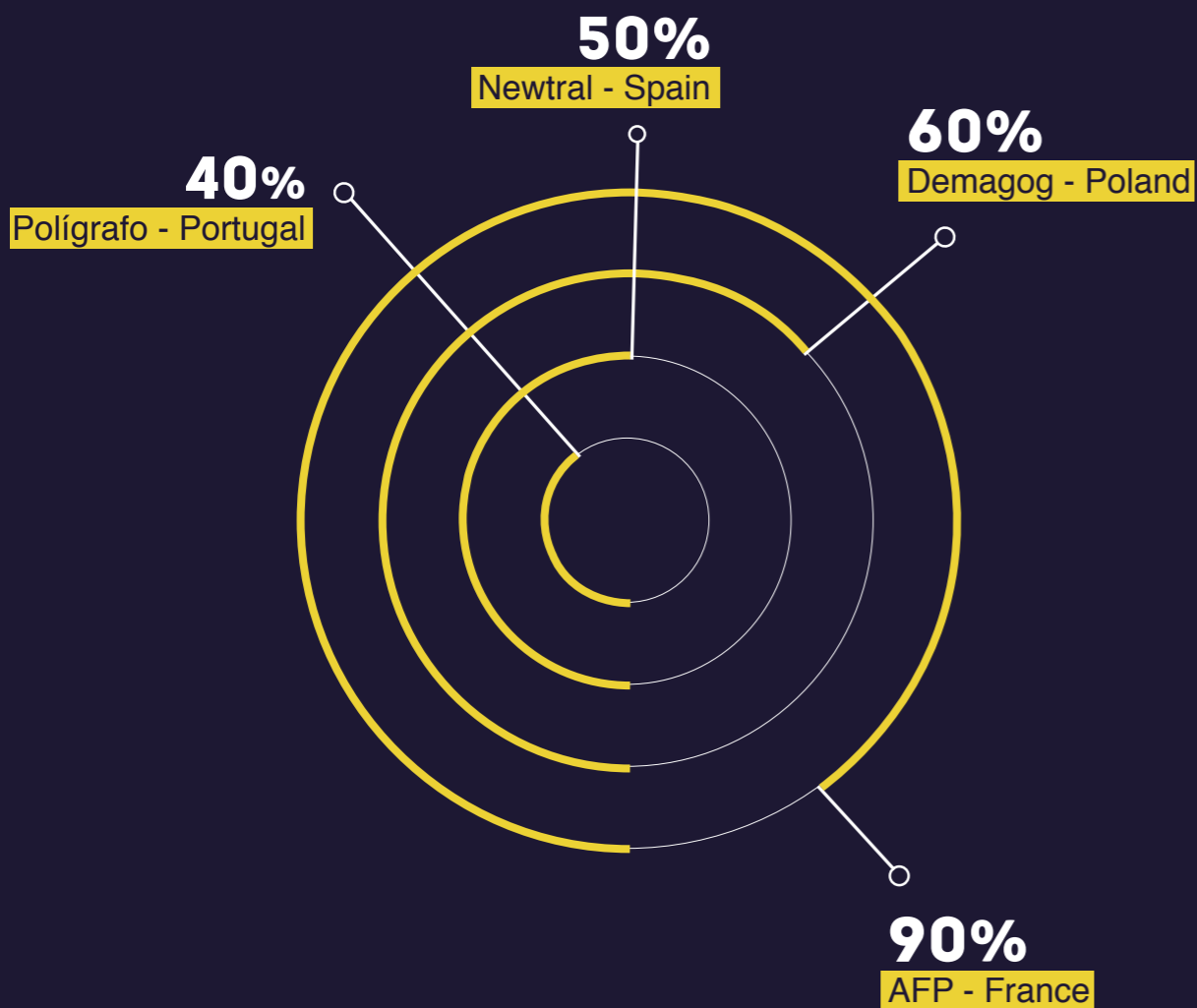
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## THE MAJORITY OF THE DISINFORMATION VERIFIED IN DECEMBER WAS COVID-19 RELATED, FOR THE FIRST TIME

The 14 organizations\* part of the EDMO fact-checking network that contributed to this brief published a total of 1.144 fact-checking articles in December 2021. Out of these articles, 589 (51,5%) focused on COVID-19 related disinformation. It is the first time since we started publishing our briefs (July 2021) that COVID-19 related disinformation represents the majority.



Significant variations exist among the organizations. For example, out of their total verifications, Polígrafo (Portugal) reported that 40% were related to COVID-19, a number that rises to 50% for Newtral (Spain), 60% for Demagog (Poland) and 90% for AFP (France).

\* Organizations that contributed to this brief: AFP, Correctiv, Delfi, Demagog (PI), Ellinika Hoaxes, France Tv, Knack Magazine, Maldita, Newtral, Ostro, PagellaPolitica/Facta, Polígrafo, The Journal Fact-Check, Verificat

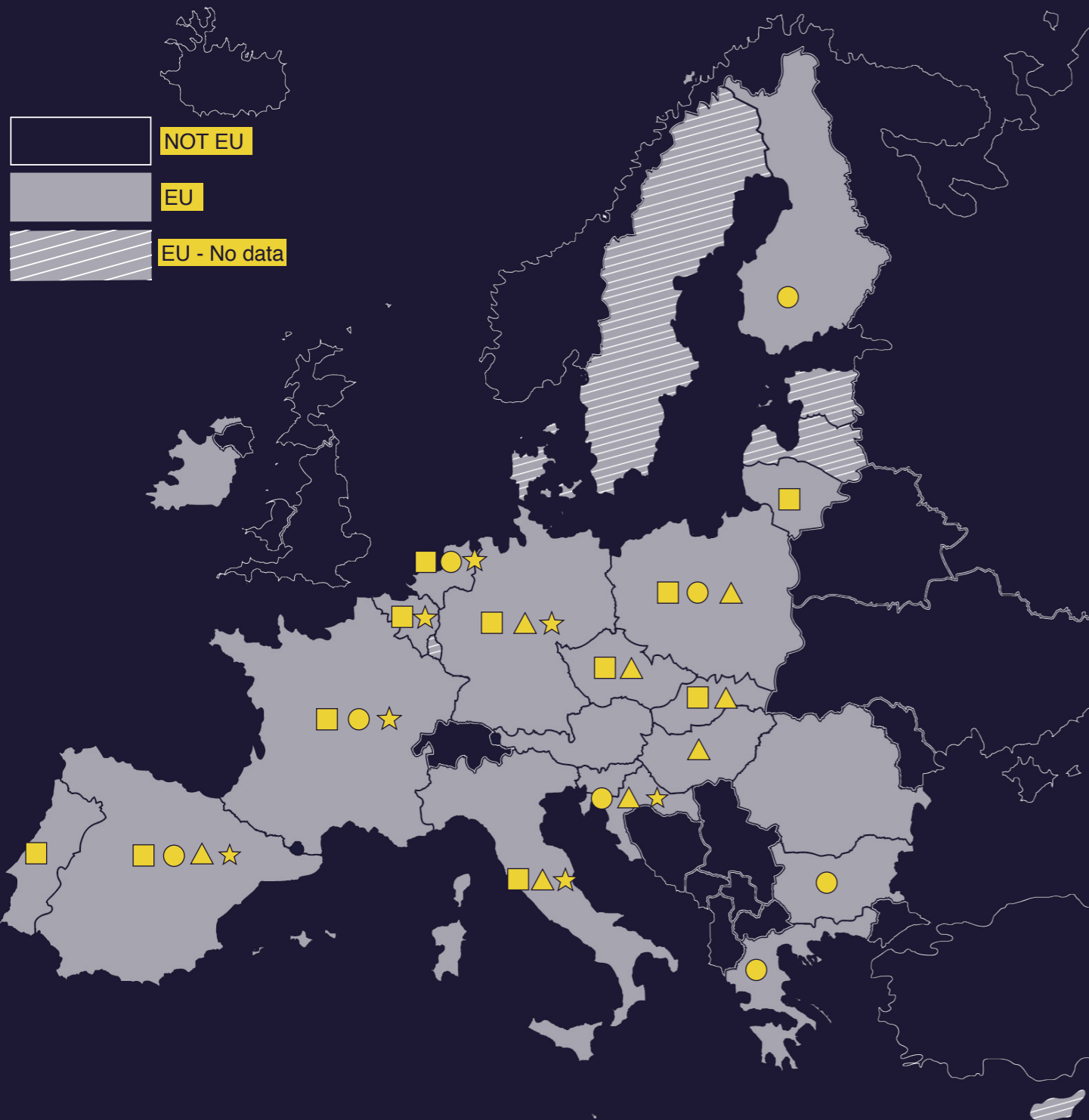
## **WHERE REALITY GOES, DISINFORMATION FOLLOWS**

In December, according to the information gathered by the 14 organizations part of EDMO fact-checking network that contributed to this brief, disinformation in the EU targeted the latest developments in vaccination campaigns and brushed up old hoaxes about containment measures that have been recently enforced again by several EU countries in order to curb the omicron wave.

In particular, many different false stories claimed that:

- Face-masks are dangerous for health
- Vaccinating children is dangerous for them and does not protect elders
- WHO says that third doses of vaccines are dangerous
- Vaccines are ineffective: the majority of patients in ICU are vaccinated
- The number of people hospitalized during and due to the omicron wave is the same than in the years before the pandemic because of seasonal flu

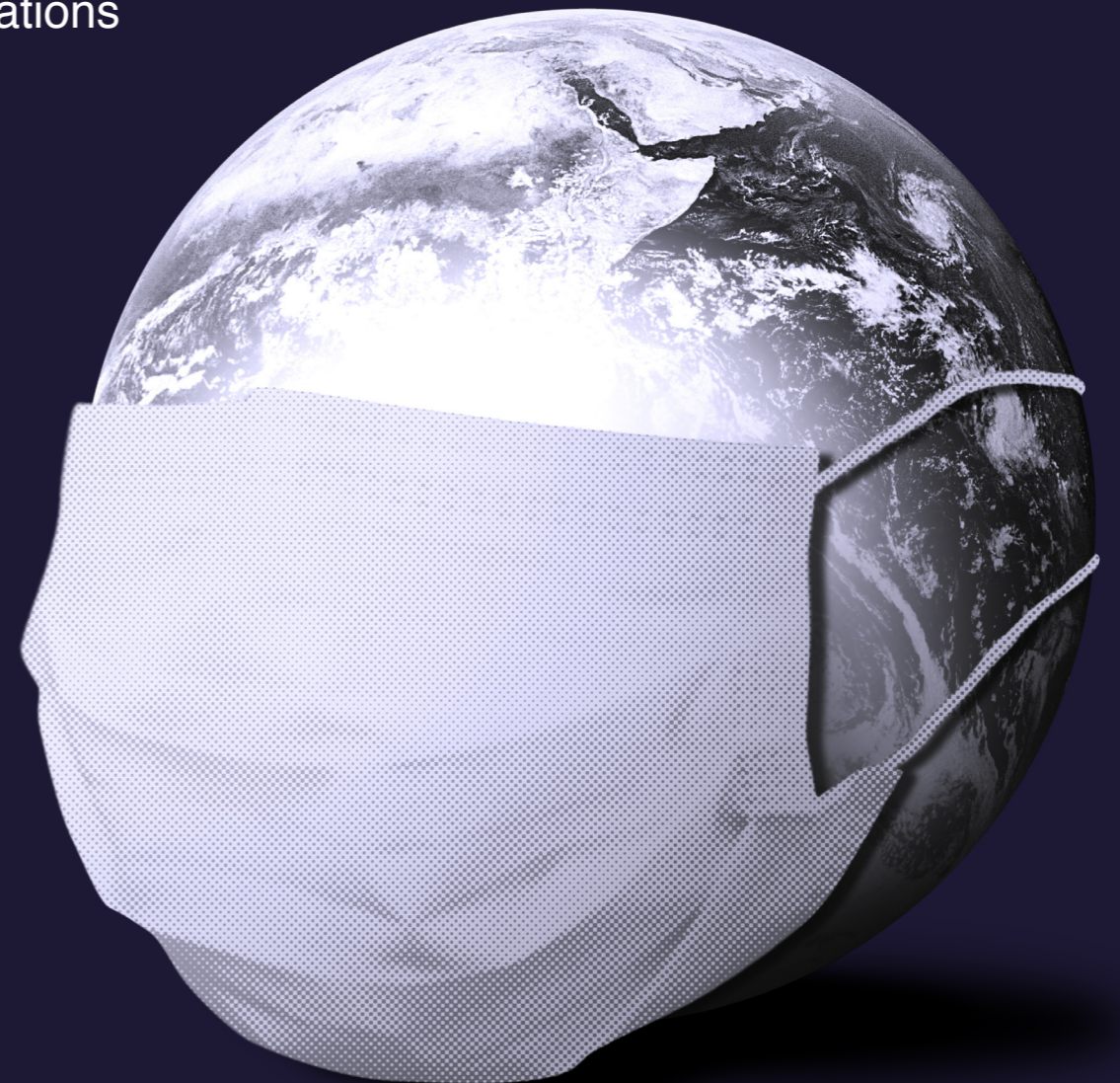
## THE FOUR FALSE STORIES WITH THE WIDEST CIRCULATION IN THE EU IN DECEMBER, BASED ON THE FACT-CHECKERS REPORTS, WERE:



- Ursula von der Leyen asked for the elimination of the Nuremberg code, that establishes some principles about human experimentation, to mandate COVID-19 vaccination
- US researcher Robert Malone making a series of claims about the alleged harm in children of mRNA vaccines against COVID-19
- ▲ A Slovenian nurse from University hospital in Ljubljana resigned and revealed a secret “code” proving that instead of Covid-19 vaccines some people get placebo, while others get a serum that will cause cancer
- ★ Reports of heart attacks among football players increased five times because of the COVID-19 vaccination

## OLD BUT GOLD, DISINFORMATION INSISTS ON FALSE STORIES ABOUT:

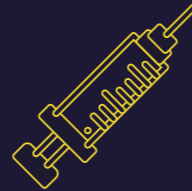
- Old videos and photos of demonstrations and celebrations, decontextualized and miscaptioned to portray huge demonstrations against COVID-19 related measures
- Vaccinated people cannot donate blood; vaccines contain graphene oxide; vaccines can lead to miscarriages; the pandemic was planned; vaccines do not work; vaccines kill; police brutality against anti-vaxxers



## THE MOST SIGNIFICANT VERIFIED DISINFORMATION STORIES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL:



**ITALY + BELGIUM:**  
The EU has an action plan to abolish Christmas



**CZECH REPUBLIC:**  
The EU made 75% vaccination rate a condition for its members to qualify for disbursement of the Recovery fund



**GREECE:**  
The French government has suspended the use of all FFP2 masks as they contain graphene



**LITHUANIA:**  
Articles describing methods to “unvaccinate” yourself after you have been inoculated

## **METHODOLOGY**

The information contained in this brief was collected via a questionnaire sent to the fact-checking organizations that are part of the EDMO fact-checking network.

Reference period: 1-31 December 2021. Number of respondents: 14.

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